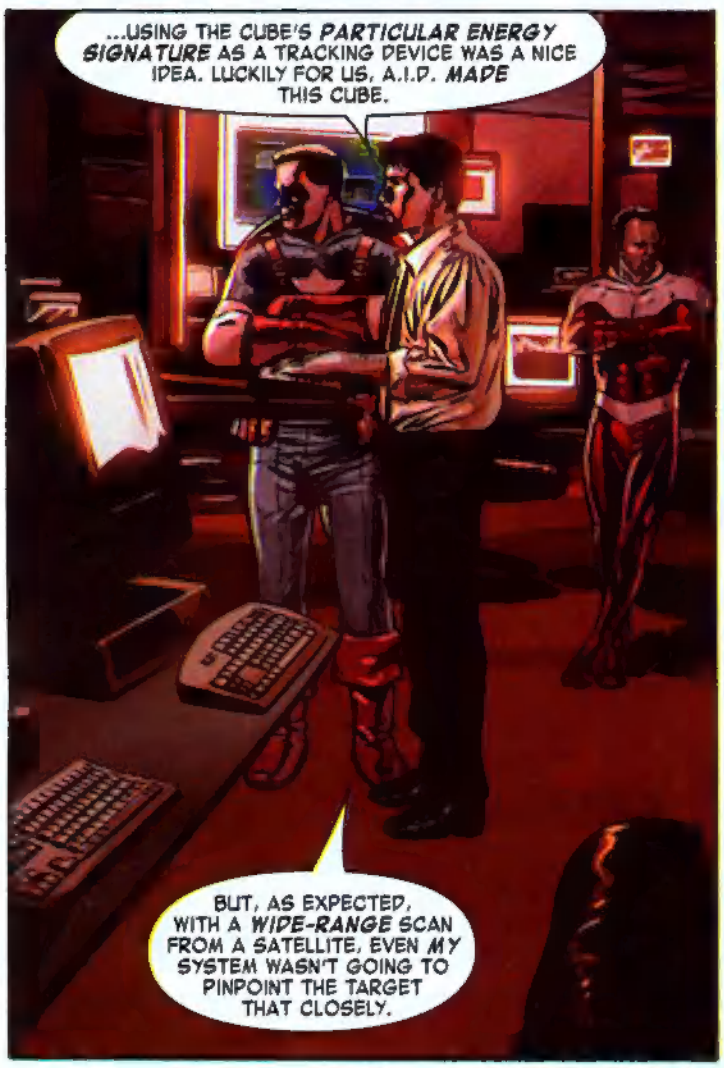
KRAKK
ZZULNNG
DAMN IT!
CAP! HEADS UP!
YYYEEAAAAHHH!
BBZAATT
HEY--

HEEEYYYY!
WHAAAA!
HEY--
AAAAAAAA--
SHRRKKKING
--AAAAAAAHHH!
NOW!

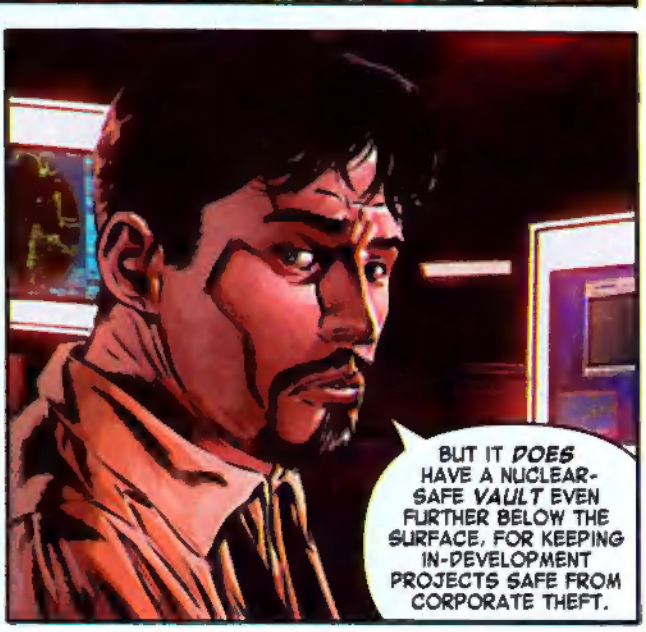
AAAAAAAAA--
--AAAAAAHHHHH!
SHHRRAAAK
CLEARLY, THAT IS NOT A TOY, MORON.
OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD...
NICE WORK...
...BUT CHECK THIS OUT... CAUGHT ME A CREEPY LITTLE MAD-SCIENTIST GUY.
WHAT-- WHAT DO YOU--
I--I'M NOT--NOT--
OH G-GOD... WHAT DO YOU WANT?
SIMPLE. I WANT YOU TO TELL ME HOW TO TRACK A COSMIC CUBE.

Stark Enterprises
New York City Division
STARK


...USING THE CUBE'S PARTICULAR ENERGY SIGNATURE AS A TRACKING DEVICE WAS A NICE IDEA. LUCKILY FOR US, A.I.D. MADE THIS CUBE.
BUT, AS EXPECTED, WITH A WIDE-RANGE SCAN FROM A SATELLITE, EVEN MY SYSTEM WASN'T GOING TO PINPOINT THE TARGET THAT CLOSELY.

EXCEPT WE GOT LUCKY AGAIN, BECAUSE THE SIGNAL'S MOVING FAST. MUST BE IN A JET.
WHERE'S IT GOING?
THAT'S WHERE IT GETS COMPLICATED. TRAJECTORY APPEARS SOUTH-SOUTHWEST, SO...
...I OVERLAID ITS PROJECTED FLIGHT PATH WITH LOCATIONS OF KRONAS HOLDINGS, AND LOOK AT THIS...
A NEXTGEN RESEARCH FACILITY THAT KRONAS RECENTLY PURCHASED.

WHY WOULD THEY BE TAKING THE CUBE THERE?
I DON'T KNOW. IT'S AN UNDERGROUND FACILITY THAT NEXTGEN HASN'T USED FOR YEARS.


BUT IT DOES HAVE A NUCLEAR-SAFE VAULT EVEN FURTHER BELOW THE SURFACE, FOR KEEPING IN-DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS SAFE FROM CORPORATE THEFT.

THEY KNEW HOW? THEN WHY NOT JUST STEAL IT BACK?
BECAUSE THEY KNOW WHAT IT IS, TOO, SO THEY AREN'T IN ANY RUSH TO ANGER ITS OWNER.
SO WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?
THAT LUKIN IS TAKING THE CUBE TO AN UNDERGROUND RESEARCH FACILITY IN THE MOUNTAINS OF WEST VIRGINIA.
I JUST SENT YOU EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT. SAM AND I ARE PRESENTLY EN ROUTE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE UP TO, BUT WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM BEFORE THEY ACCESS THE DEEP-STORAGE VAULT.
STARK
YOU'RE ALREADY--? YOU SHOULD'VE CALLED ME SOONER.
SO FURY CAN GET TIED UP IN RED TAPE AGAIN? NO THANKS.
JUST CONSIDER THIS A RELIABLE TIP THAT THERE'S A WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION AT THE COORDINATES I JUST SENT YOU.
ROGERS OUT.
DAMN IT...
THIS IS AGENT 13. I NEED A STRIKE TEAM READY... NOW.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Sadly, the month escaped without me noticing I hadn't done this letters page. I was just sitting there loving all the art Steve was sending me and thinking about how you were all going to pee your pants with joy at that big fight scene with Cap and Iron Man and Falcon. I'm rushing to get this out, so no Question of the Month this time. On to the letters...

Sometimes the simplest details have the most punch. Seeing that copy of a Golden Age Sub-Mariner comic in the flophouse in CAP #11 had that effect on me. It was obvious that you (and Steve Epting) were paying homage to that long-ago scene in FF #4.

That's the issue in which Johnny Storm, fleeing his troubles, hunkered down in a Bowery flophouse, picked up an old beat-up comic mag from the 1940s starring Subby as reading material, and soon learned a bearded down-and-outer a few bunks over was--holy coincidence!--an amnesiac Namor. Was that Namor and Johnny in the background of that CAP panel? Maybe, maybe not. (Was Bucky hidden in an FF panel? Don't think so.)

Regardless, you very quietly, but very neatly, tied together two comics more than 40 years apart. I'm reserving judgment on the Winter Soldier storyline, but this tossed-off little moment spoke volumes about your deep knowledge and respect for what came before.

PMM David Allen
Claremont, CA

CAPTAIN AMERICA #11 is the first Cap comic I have ever gotten. But after reading it I noticed something. In the fourth issue of the very original FANTASTIC FOUR series, Johnny Storm gets mad at the rest of the team and leaves for a while. While he is wandering around, he goes into a flophouse. While he is in there he finds an old Sub-Mariner comic. He then notices a guy in the place who looks like the Sub-Mariner. He offers to give the guy a shave and he finds out the man really is the Sub-Mariner who has been living in a flophouse. So the point is, in CAPTAIN AMERICA #11, the Winter Soldier is found in a flophouse. In the picture is a Sub-Mariner comic on someone else's bed. In the background is a blond guy and a guy with a beard. Was the Winter Soldier in the place as Johnny Storm when he discovered the Sub-Mariner?

Skylar
Tacoma, WA

You are both correct, that was indeed intended to be the same place that Johnny Storm found Namor all those years ago, or to at least be a nod to it. If you look closely, you'll see Namor in the background there, but it was the Mighty Steve Epting who actually put the Sub-Mariner comic on the bunk. Another little "Easter Egg" for intrepid readers was the panel with Stan and Jack in the background on the streets of New York in the 70s. And no one noticed...

The origin of the Winter Soldier in CAP #11 didn't hold many surprises after all the hints that had been dropped in previous issues. It was still enjoyable to see the puzzle pieced together, especially because all the pieces fit so well. Initially I did not like the idea of Bucky being brought back, but the way it has been presented, has made me change my mind. I'm looking forward to the further chapters of this story. Steve Epting's art continues to impress me. His Cap is in a league of its own. Don't let him leave anytime soon!

Lars Meyer
Germany

I have no plans of ever letting Steve leave, or at least, if and when he does, I plan to keep my grubby mitts on him, so whatever he draws down the line, I hope to write. He just gets better every issue.

Congratulations to all the creators who have participated in this fascinating relaunch of CAP, especially Brubaker, Epting and Lark, for this interpretation of a much understated character. It's interesting to note that a lot of other readers have commented that the book hasn't been this good since Steve Englehart was at the helm, and whilst not disrespecting creative teams between then and now, I'd have to agree. What is refreshing to see is that Mr. Brubaker is not rehashing or rewriting past chapters in Cap's history, but giving us something new to sink our collective reading teeth into, whilst still maintaining the whole mythos of past continuity.

Let this be a lesson to any potential budding writers out there and also to company editorial policy--you don't have to rewrite and recreate a character to regain interest, you just have to tell some great stories. One thing Englehart and Brubaker both share is that they are true to the character of Steve Rogers/Cap. and, in essence this is essential to quality storytelling.

And it's this current storytelling and storyline which leads me to ask a few questions; I'm looking at the character of Aleksander Lukin, he looks a little familiar facially, and then there's Kronas International. Kronas/Chronos sounds very similar. You see what I'm getting at here?

Time and all its implications! Would Kang by chance have something to do with all this, especially the fractured memories as seen by utilizing the cube? Is Lukin in fact Kang, formulating a more devious approach to a longstanding thorn in his side?

I'm probably way off base, but it seems plausible nonetheless. Whatever the ultimate outcome, you've got me hooked.

Peter Woodcock
(via e-mail)

That's an interesting theory, certainly...But I'm afraid Kang is not involved in our series at this point. I dig Kang, but he's much more an Avengers villain than a Cap villain. And time travel is so hard to get right.

This response to CAP #11 took me a few days to write. Although the ramifications of the revelation of the Winter Soldier's identity were immediately felt on the Captain America Message Board--and the metaphorical "wagons" began circling in the camps of both those against and for the 'return' of Bucky. I have only one piece of advice to my fellow readers, after experiencing the issue. After you get whatever emotions (positive or negative) out of the way from the first reading, read it again, but this time try to see it from Steve Rogers' eyes, from his POV. Why? Because if you do, then you will understand the power of the last panel on that last page.

For Cap: If there were any sort of fate worse than death, this is it. This is even worse than the time the Masters of Evil invaded the Avengers Mansion, beat up Jarvis and the only photo of Cap's mother was torn up in front of him, while he was helplessly tied up. This is really, truly kicking a man while he's down. Anybody else (a lesser being) wouldn't even be blamed if they just gave up. This is a prime example of a story where a hero must rise from spirit crushing adversity!

The sick joke of the Russians using Bucky as an assassin against the U.S. and Allies brought a smile to my lips as I recalled the ending of "You Only Live Twice" and the first chapter "The Man with the Golden Gun"--and to be clear: that's Ian Fleming novels, NOT the movies.

It's so tragic, yet refreshing, that you took time to show us what an indomitable spirit Bucky Barnes (at least his body) still had--coming back from the dead, damaged as he was--human (i.e. powerless) as he was--there should be no doubt ever again that he's a partner (sidekick) worthy to be alongside Captain America during those dark, violent days of the war.

Ed, it's not the fact that you brought back Bucky...it's the way you brought him back and for that you have my congratulations on a story that had gravitas, poignancy and honestly, cojones.

Onward towards the rest of this story!

Ricky Cruz
(via e-mail)

P.S.--Oh and by the way, I may be going out on a limb here, but I think the Red Skull is alive inside the Cosmic Cube, manipulating events if not reality outright. Even if I'm wrong, you and this entire creative team ROCK!

Thanks, Ricky, that's a very thoughtful way to look at it. When writing this story, I've always been more concerned with what it would mean to Steve than to the readers. I knew some readers would be unhappy, but for me, the way this story affects Steve Rogers is the most important part of it.

Skull inside the cube? Do you really want me to answer that? Oh, you do? Well, no, that's not it.

I must say that CAPTAIN AMERICA #11 truly blew me away. It's definitely the best issue of CAP I've read in a good long while. I am very happy to discover that the Winter Soldier is indeed actually Bucky, and I not only enjoyed reading the tale of how the Russians twisted him into becoming their pawn but I also liked the layout of the story itself through file pages and diary entries. I was also quite shocked when I discovered that Bucky had indeed died after the plane explosion but was literally resurrected in a horrifyingly Frankenstein's Monster-like way by Karpov and the Russians, right after being desecrated by them for his blood and whatnot. His brain severely damaged, Bucky was left a blank state to be brainwashed by the Russians and trained by them to be their perfect killing machine against the Americans and their wartime allies. And then, when Bucky's mental state started diminishing, brought on by his subconscious or by his remembrance of past bits of his life, things took an even more terrible turn for the poor guy.

What a final panel on the last page. Cap must *really* be suffering now! What's he going to do about all this? What's he going to do when he finally confronts his former partner?

Thanks to Ed Brubaker for making the CAPTAIN AMERICA comic a magnificent read again! I haven't enjoyed Cap this much since the late, great Mark Gruenwald left the title!

But this mini-review is not yet over. I am still left wondering something--does what happened to Bucky still somehow tie into what was going on with Jack Monroe? Was Jack Monroe a failed Winter Soldier?

Andrew Burke
(via e-mail)

I'm afraid the Jack Monroe story from issue #7 was not part of some grander mystery. It was just what it claimed to be on its face, the last days of Jack Monroe. He was going crazy for exactly why he said he was. I know fans have been speculating about that issue ever since then, but Jack was simply used as a scapegoat for Lukin's attack on Philadelphia, and as another knife in Cap's gut, basically. His death will have resonance in future issues, though, on many sides, I promise.

And that's it for this month. Join us next time for the action-packed conclusion of the Winter Soldier arc! And remember, as I said last issue, we here at Freedom of Speech have been having a hell of a time thinking up the Question of the Month lately, so if any readers out there have Questions you want us to answer, please send them in and we'll credit you if we use your Q. Seeya next time.

Ed Brubaker

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